

The Kokoda Track, Papua New Guinea

This document provides everything you need to know to take on the Kokoda Track. From what to pack to what to expect, we have covered all the queries received over the many years we have operated trekking tours on the Kokoda Track.

If you have a specific question at any time, always feel free to reach out to our friendly team and we will be more than happy to assist.



About South Sea Horizons

South Sea Horizons (SSH) is a PNG, Destination Management Company and a Tour Operator (ITO) that promotes and sells activity-based tours in Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. SSH places a strong emphasis on conducting low impact tours and with an aim of assisting local indigenous communities to develop eco-tourism products that are sustainable and easily managed by the community. We believe that SSH have a far superior ability to connect with local village operators and suppliers, acting as a quality control mechanism for our offshore clients.

Your adventure starts here!

To ensure you make the most of your holiday we've compiled some information that you'll need on your trip. Read this *Pre-Departure Document* in conjunction with your detailed *Tour Itinerary* (which gives the day-by-day information for your tour, the detailed passport, insurance, visa, and vaccination information) your invoice and your itinerary (which includes all your booking details, such as flights, hotels and tours). Please take all three documents with you when you travel.

Trip Grade: Challenging Trek

A high level of physical preparation is essential for this trek. We will trek for up to eight hours per day, occasionally on narrow or little-used tracks. Most people can compete the track with adequate training, the support of our local staff and willpower. You should spend some months training beforehand, using stairs rather than escalators and elevators wherever possible. At weekends, walks on hilly trails while carrying your pack are strongly advised. Altitudes may exceed 2,000 meters on some days.

Climate & Terrain

During this adventure you will be passing through several different climatic zones, from hot and humid coastal areas to quite high mountain areas where conditions may vary considerably.

Luggage

You should try to travel as lightly as possible. Your total belongings should weigh no more than 12 kilograms (backpack and day pack combined). We use charter flights to Kokoda and weight is restricted to the small aircraft used. When you begin your training, you should commence with less weight than you plan to carry on the trek and slowly build up.

Personal Porter

Included in your tour cost is the assistance of a personal porter to carry your main kit. Please note that there is a weight limit of 12 kilograms for personal belongings carried by the porters as they will also carry your food packs. Any additional items will need to be carried by the trekkers themselves in daypacks. Each day you will be asked to carry your own water and one day's food pack as well as personal items such as your camera, guidebook etc. We include a 1:1 trekker to Porter ratio to promote relationship building between porters and trekkers. Our aim is to provide greater employment opportunities for porters as well as ensuring that all SSH trekkers complete the trek from start to finish.

Our intention is that relationship building between the trekkers and the porters becomes one of the most important experiences of the trip, reflecting the wartime bonds between Australian troops and the Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels.

Some Questions and Answers on the Kokoda Track

What is the Kokoda Track?

The Kokoda track is one of the many walking tracks in Papua New Guinea that existed long before the Europeans came into this part of the world. It was used for trade and cultural interaction between tribes and is still used for these purposes today.

During World War II, the Japanese decided to use this trail as means of ground attack against the Australians in Port Moresby. The idea was to take Port Moresby and use it as a base from which to stage a direct assault on Australia. One end of the track lies in the North at a village called Kokoda. It winds up and down over the rugged Owen Stanley ranges and finishes in the south at Owers Corner, not far from Port Moresby. Both the Kokoda and the Northern coastal plains were the scene of violent close contact jungle warfare as the Australians retreated in the face of the Japanese onslaught.

How long does it take to complete the Kokoda Track?

We will complete the track in 7-days should everything go according to plan. It is very unlikely that this timeframe will change, however in the event of disruptive weather or an emergency, the length of the track may change.

Do I have to be very fit and experienced to trek the Kokoda Track?

No. Most can achieve the track with adequate training, guidance and willpower. It is important that a certain level of health and fitness be attained prior to the trip. Each person should undertake some form of regular physical exercise for a period of time prior to departure.

What is the best training to do in preparation for this trek?

General cardio-vascular fitness can be built up by any form of exercise that raises the heart rate for a period; some form of specific exercise should also be done to build up the leg muscles. The best exercise for this walking up and down steep hills using the boots that you will be using to walk the track. After a while you should add your backpack with some weight in it. Slowly build the weight up to no more than 12 kilograms. This is the maximum weight that can be carried with ease on the steep hills on the track.

Should I have a thorough medical examination prior to taking on this trek?

Yes. You need to be in very good physical condition to have a chance of completing this trek. In fact, it is mandatory that you see a local GP before booking this trip and get a medical certificate to walk this challenging trek.

Is the Kokoda Track isolated and what happens if an accident occurs?

Yes, the track is isolated and backup medical and rescue services are not easily available. We have drawn up a contingency plan for evacuation from along the track in the unlikely event of a serious problem occurring. The focal point of any communication with the outside is our satellite telephone and two-way radio.

Is the Kokoda Track a tropical nightmare?

It can be. It often depends on unpredictable seasonal conditions. Most of our crossings have only had one or two days of rain in the total crossing time. Our trips are scheduled at the time of the year to catch the most stable weather conditions, but it can still be very wet every now and then. This can make the trip very difficult. It is possible for the streams to flood, and we carry suitable equipment for safe crossing once they drop to levels that are not dangerous. Malaria is present and all walkers will be required to take suitable medication by medical prescription to prevent contracting the illness.

What will we eat & drink?

We provide food packs for each trekker which are, distributed daily. All the food that is provided is from Port Moresby's finest supermarket, Boroko Food World. Most goods are imported from countries such as Australia and transported to PNG. Meals are also occasionally supplemented using fruit and vegetables from the villages that we pass through. You will be required to pay for your own hotel meals (excluding breakfast) in Port Moresby.

It is important to take a lot of water each day and stay well hydrated. Water is collected from clean streams and your guides will advise where and when there are good collection points. If you wish to use water purification tablets, we suggest trying these products prior to travelling as some products have adverse effects on different people.

All other meals are included in the cost of the expedition. Local food consists of various combinations of the following: rice, pasta, sweet potato, potato, yams, corn, taro, oranges, mandarins, cabbage, bananas, pineapples, paw paw, sago, and coconut. Clients who have special dietary requirements should discuss with us their specific needs well in advance of departure so that we can plan food that is suitable for you. Along the trek, there are some options to purchase fresh local produce of fruit and vegetables, with the cost ranging between K5.00 to K15.00.

What are the natural features of the Kokoda Track which are fascinating?

Papua New Guinea is an incredible country because of its cultural, geological and biological diversity. During our trip we will pass through remote tribes, experience contrasting weather and view a range of plant, animal and bird life that will inspire you to learn more about the natural history of Papua New Guinea.

What are the rewards of trekking the Kokoda Track?

Once you complete the Kokoda Track, you will be filled with a great sense of achievement at having completed one of the world's most famous walks. You will have the lasting memories of first-hand observation of unique and spectacular natural features of the land, while also gaining some understanding of what the Australian soldiers must have gone through in their fight to protect our country. The experience of interacting with people from another culture and a sense of comradeship that can only be gained by a group of people who have worked under trying conditions to attain a common goal.



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What else do I need to know?

Passport

Please ensure that you have a current passport, with an accurate photo, that is valid for at least six months after your scheduled return home. Also check your airline tickets are in the same name as your passport. Some countries may require that you have a return air ticket or have sufficient funds to purchase such a ticket.

Travel VISA

All nationalities currently require a visa for Papua New Guinea – this is not obtainable upon arrival at the airport.

Insurance

All SSH tours require you to have comprehensive travel insurance that covers you for medical costs associated with hospitalization, emergency travel and repatriation back to your home country. Your SSH leader will need to see and record your policy details at the pre-tour briefing. If you arrive without travel insurance your tour leader will require you to purchase a policy before you continue your journey with us.

If you are covered by a policy arranged through your credit card company you will be asked to provide evidence of this cover, as well as a 24-hour emergency contact number. The tour leader will need to record your credit card number, as this is required to activate any request for emergency assistance. You should also bring along the travel insurance information booklet provided by your credit card company. It is your responsibility to ensure that you meet the requirements set out by your credit card company to be effectively covered and that the cover offered is of a suitable standard.

Medical Kit

It is a good idea to take a small medical kit with you, and you should consider packing the following items:

- antibiotics
- lip-balm
- moisturizer
- sunscreen
- painkillers
- antiseptic (e.g. Betadine)
- anti- diarrhoea tablets (for changes in diet and water)
- laxatives
- band-aids/moleskin/dressing strips for blisters
- small scissors/tweezers

It is also recommended to carry a letter from your doctor explaining your less commonly prescribed medications that you may be carrying.

Common medical issues

Stomach upsets are not uncommon when travelling through new destinations (usually a 24–48-hour bug) and this may cause diarrhoea, leading to dehydration. Should you develop a stomach upset, you should eat only in moderation and drink plenty of fluids. It is a good idea to carry a couple of sachets of rehydrates with you (such as Gastrolite). We also suggest that you pack one of the conventional anti- diarrhoea tablets such as Imodium.

It can be quite easy to get sunburnt in PNG. You should take sensible precautions such as wearing a hat and using a good UV sunscreen. Finally, drink plenty of fluids – preferably water.

Vaccinations

Please consult your doctor or nearest vaccination centre to see if any of the listed vaccinations are required: ***This list by no means complete and only your doctor or vaccination centre can provide you with the latest up-to-date information:***

- Typhoid
- Polio
- Tetanus
- Smallpox
- Gamma Globulin or Harvix (against Hepatitis A)
- Hepatitis B
- Yellow Fever
- Meningitis.

Malaria

Malaria is prevalent in many tropical areas of Asia and The Pacific. Please advise your doctor which regions you will be visiting and discuss the necessary medication with them. All anti-malarial tablets are taken for a period before possible exposure and continued for a period after such exposure ceases and should be taken carefully according to instructions. It is possible that the people in your group may be taking different anti-malarial tablets. Be aware that some anti-malarial medication may increase skin sensitivity to sunlight and take extra care to ensure good use of sunscreens. A good insect repellent is advisable if visiting these regions, preferably one containing a high percentage of Deet.

Government Travel Advice

Many Governments publish up to date travel advice for countries around the world. Information is gleaned from both local and international sources as well as 'friendly' governments, and the notices are often on the cautious side. Sometimes there will be conflicting information. For example, the Australian, UK, and Canadian governments may agree on the nature of the advice; however, frequently they do not. And sometimes the views expressed by certain governments can be coloured by political considerations. SSH will monitor these travel advisories closely and may alter itineraries or cancel trips as a result. However, it is also your responsibility to stay informed and form a balanced view. We recommend that you visit the website or contact the departments listed below. Unless otherwise stated, it is not normally the intention of the relevant government travel advice to dissuade you, from traveling. Rather, it is to inform you of where and when you should exercise caution to avoid problems.

Please also note that, as a responsible tour operator, we always maintain constant links with our group's operators and your safety is our main priority.

Additional Expenses

You will need to take with you to cover any additional meals / drinks not included in your tour cost. Other costs to consider are drinking water, tips, laundry, souvenirs, additional sightseeing and possible delays. It is much better to come with more than you would expect to spend and to end the trip with a surplus, rather than being caught short. It is always useful to carry an additional amount for emergencies that could happen during your travels. If there is a medical emergency, you are sometimes required to pay at the source and be reimbursed later by your insurance company. This is the situation where having a credit card can be useful.

How much cash should I bring?

In our trip notes we suggested an appropriate allowance for additional meals. This does not include alcoholic drinks or soft drinks. In addition to this you should carry sufficient funds for optional activities, additional sightseeing, shopping and tips. As a guideline we suggest that you allow AUD \$50-\$70 per day to allow for additional meals not included in the tour.

Photo Etiquette

Please ask first if you want to take someone's photograph. This is just a normal courtesy and if you are refused permission please abide by that person's wishes. At certain ancient sites, and in most museums, photography (video or still) may be forbidden, or may incur an extra charge for camera-use. Do not take photos of buildings, structures and personnel of potential military significance (including airports, bridges, army barracks, and police stations).

Cultural Considerations

Please remember that you are traveling in a part of the world where standards and cultural values may be different to what you are used to. Please always bear this in mind and be sensitive to it in the way you dress and the way you behave.